

Markham, Stouffville federal ridings could change

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

Oak Ridges, a voting district that already takes in Whitchurch-Stouffville, Richmond Hill and northern Markham, may soon include part of Aurora.

Proposals posted this week by an Elections Canada task force would turn York Region's five federal ridings into seven. Provincial ridings would be the same as federal ones.

The new ridings could not be used for a provincial or federal election, however, until at

least the summer of 2004.

The Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario revealed Saturday that it wants to deal with York's exceptional population growth by creating separate new ridings called Vaughan and Richmond Hill.

It would also split the current riding of York North, combining Georgina and East Gwillimbury with part of Simcoe County for a riding called York North-Simcoe.

Oak Ridges, one of Canada's most populous ridings, would lose most of Richmond Hill, keeping only that part of town — north of Elgin Mills Road east of Yonge Street and north Gamble Road to the west — known as Oak Ridges.

Renamed Oak Ridges-Markham, the riding would include more land in eastern Markham and in another, more controversial addition, the town of Aurora east of

Yonge.

Aurora west of Yonge would be left to another riding called Newmarket-King-Aurora, an arrangement Aurora town councillor John West and Vaughan-King-Aurora MPP Greg Sorbara say they'll oppose.

"I've never seen such a cock-up in my life. They've just sliced us in half," Mr. West said this week.

The riding of Markham, renamed Markham-Unionville, would shrink slightly, shedding rural areas in the southeast part of the town and the old commercial district of Main Street, Markham.

The riding of Thornhill is

only one in the region that would not be changed.

The commission said the number of ridings in Ontario must increase from 103 to 106 because, between 1991 and 2001, the province's population rose from 10 million to 11.4 million.

Comments can be made on the proposals this fall, including at a day of hearings Nov. 12 at the Sheraton Parkway Toronto North in Richmond Hill.

New electoral boundaries will be approved by parliament sometime after April, 2003.

—with files from Roy Green

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